

CHAOS IN THE UNIVERSE AND INJUSTICE IN OUR LIVES, PART 1.

This will be the introductory article in a series about the perceived or real injustices that are a stumbling block of all religions: namely, why do the innocents often suffer and the guilty often thrive. I will relate this question to the practical view of the universe as a chaotic place.

Religions have been offering lame answers for millennia to the question: why do bad things happen to good people. They cite: a more complicated form of justice, a long-term view of justice, a judicial system that goes beyond our mortality (as in heaven and hell), a temporary testing of our moral fiber, a battle between satan and God, and so on. None of these answers satisfy me. The related theological questions are numerous also: can God stop the tragedies if He wanted to and why doesn't He. None of these can be answered. In fact the traditional explanations satisfy many people but there are also large numbers who react to these rationally weak attempts by doubting the benefits of faith in general. In my case, any religion that tells me there is some form of justice when a child suffers from cancer, or a community suffers from a great natural disaster, loses much of my respect.

This topic has been treated in literature (as in *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, showing that too often we cannot examine lives and find guilt that warrants catastrophe) and philosophy also (as in Stoicism) without arriving at much practical guidance. There is even a recent book, *Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People*, that starts with a good analysis but offers a very unsatisfying conclusion. We can throw up our hands when it comes to understanding injustice or we can try to offer an outlook that is at least intellectually more reasonable even if it isn't very emotionally comforting.

Scientists say that all things physical follow a set of natural laws and so the universe is all just a very complicated machine. Unfortunately this is not helpful. Since we don't know all the laws and since most things are too big or too small, the scientific approach is altogether impractical. It would be more reasonable to build an approach to the universe that starts with apparent chaos and then see how human affairs are affected by this situation. Einstein was not too keen on chaos; he says God doesn't play dice with the universe. In my view the injustices of our life would be better understood if we did think of the universe as a giant dice game, one that favors us one minute and is cruel to us the next. So we have to mentally and physically try to protect ourselves from chance as much as possible, realizing that there is no way to be completely safe.

In the coming articles on this topic. I will delve into the above-mentioned issues more deeply.

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